

Effect of Storytelling Techniques on Improving Communication Skills of Seventh Graders

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ABSTRACT: Finding out how well storytelling methods work to improve seventh graders' communication skills is the main goal of this research. The purpose of this research is to find out how much seventh graders' communication skills can be improved by reading narratives. The project will gather information on students' perspectives on the use of storytelling using a questionnaire, pre- and post-tests, and semi-structured interviews with ESL teachers. Word 2010 will be used to assess the data in order to choose the best statistical method for testing hypotheses and interpreting the results. Students in seventh grade at Nabatieh's Al-Nour Modern High School improved their communication skills, according to the research. According to the findings of this study, the Lebanese Curriculum System should make it a top priority to teach students how to communicate effectively via the use of stories. Teaching children via narratives may help them become better communicators, according to one preliminary survey research. According to the survey, using stories in the classroom makes students more invested in their education since it increases their interest in and understanding of the material. Researchers in the future should expand this study to include a wider range of samples from other locations.

KEYWORDS: Storytelling techniques, Communication skills, Grade seven students, Lebanese Curriculum System, Student engagement

Date of Submission: 04-02-2025

Date of acceptance: 16-02-2025

I. INTRODUCTION

Language plays a vital role in communication and is used for various purposes, such as writing research papers, making calls, and engaging in business and social interactions (Guerin, 2003). English, being an international language, is particularly important for Arab learners, who need to master the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—to communicate effectively with native speakers. The use of literature, particularly short stories, is a powerful tool to enhance these skills, as literature exposes students to unmodified language and encourages interaction in the classroom. As a time-tested method across cultures, storytelling engages pupils emotionally and intellectually, improving their communication skills (Nair, 2021).

Sharma (2018) observed that narrative improves speaking and communication abilities. Language development, emotional intelligence, and human behavior understanding may benefit from narrative tactics that promote verbal competency in young children. These tactics engage students in tales via group activities, increasing their interest and engagement. Active learning involves active listening, observation, and involvement with the content, which are essential to language acquisition.

Digital storytelling is a popular project-based learning method (Wu, 2020). It boosts students' learning motivation, problem-solving, teamwork, and knowledge sharing. Research shows that digital storytelling makes education more engaging and creative and enhances students' communication abilities by enabling them create and share multimedia stories. The evolution of short tales from "The Epic of Gilgamesh" and Homer's "Iliad" to current narratives shows the continuity of storytelling in human communication (Powell, 2015).

Certain aspects of short tales can teach communication. Short tales are 1,600 to 20,000 words long, have one main topic, and few characters. Visual aspects, conflict, reader relatability, and surprises make short tales interesting and memorable, improving learning (Leong, 2017).

Telling engages several brain regions, making the listener feel more connected and promotes communication (Dhiman, 2023). It releases dopamine and oxytocin, which are linked to motivation, empathy, and collaboration, and it creates "neural coupling," which helps listeners relate to the tale. Storytelling improves communication because of these effects. Despite its long-known advantages, some schools undervalue narrative. This study investigates how successfully seventh students at Al-Nour Modern High School can enhance their communication skills via storytelling. The diagnostic method involves pupils reading, listening, and repeating short tales and then giving oral presentations to show their knowledge. The results suggest that storytelling might enhance students' language and writing abilities and promote active learning.

In conclusion, the research emphasizes the need to incorporate storytelling into language learning curricula, especially in the context of teaching English. Storytelling enhances communication, fosters engagement, and helps students develop important language skills. Further research and implementation of storytelling in classrooms could lead to better educational outcomes, particularly in improving students' oral and written communication abilities.

II. METHODOLOGY

The research employs a constructivist approach and action research methodology to explore the impact of storytelling on the communication skills of grade seven students. It involves two groups: one receiving traditional lectures, and the other engaging in storytelling-based lessons. Data collection includes pre- and post-tests, a structured questionnaire, student artifacts, and observations. The researcher, a participant observer, designs and implements workshops, reflecting on and adjusting practices based on feedback. The study focuses on enhancing oral, written, and interpersonal communication skills. Instruments used include surveys, field notes, audio recordings, and student artifacts. Validity is ensured through face and content validity.

III. DISCUSSION

The study investigates the impact of storytelling on improving the communication skills of grade 7 students learning English. The data reveals a significant improvement in students' abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing after engaging with storytelling activities.

Pre-test results showed that a majority of students faced difficulties in listening (80%), speaking (85%), and writing (75%), while fewer struggled with reading (30%). However, post-test results indicated a marked improvement, with only 40% finding listening difficult, 50% struggling with speaking, and 35% facing challenges in writing. The following chart shows the percentage of difficulties that the students of grade seven suffer from while learning English language, which appeared after the pre-tests.

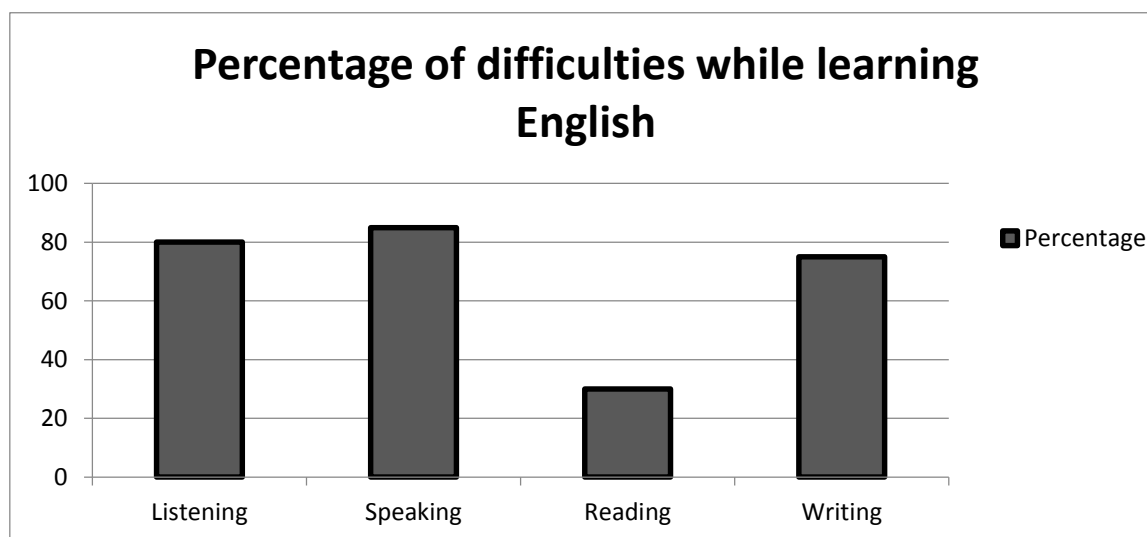


Figure 1: Most difficult skill for young learners during the pre-tests

Figure 1 shows that 80% of students find listening a difficult skill, 85% find that speaking is the most difficult skill to gain, and 75% percent of students find that writing is a difficult skill. However, 30% of the students find it difficult to read a text or story in English language, and that is because they may have made mistakes in pronunciation.

The following chart shows the percentage of difficulties that students of grade seven suffer from while learning English language, which appeared after the post-tests.

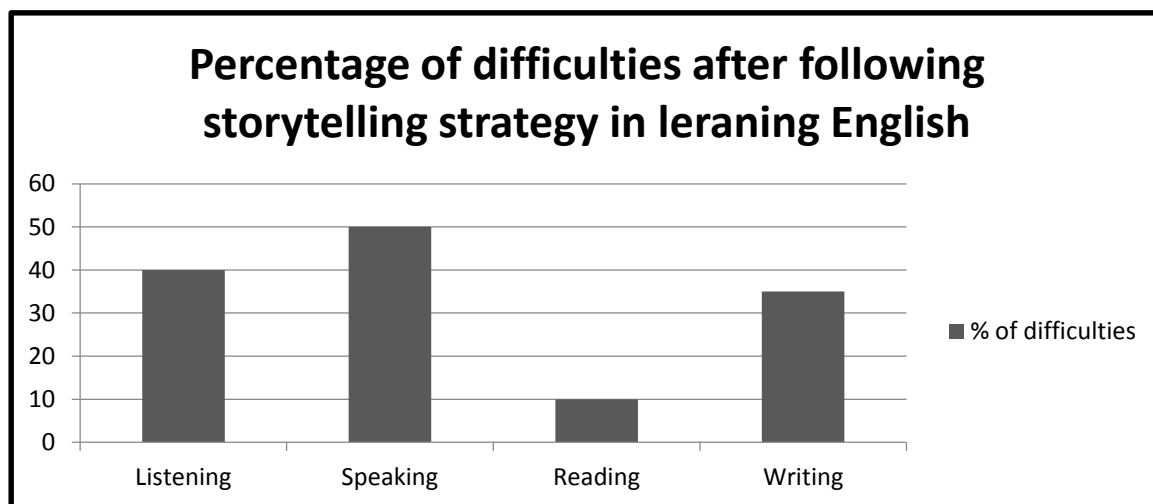


Figure 2: Most difficult skill for young learners after the post-tests

Figure 2 shows that students improved after following a sound storytelling structure with the other students and the percentage of difficulties became less after post-tests.

Forty percent (40%) of students found listening a difficult skill, 50% found that speaking is the most difficult skill to gain, and 35% percent of students found that writing is a difficult skill. However, 10% of the students found it difficult to read a text or story in English language, and that was because they made mistakes in pronunciation.

Results of pre-tests and post-tests

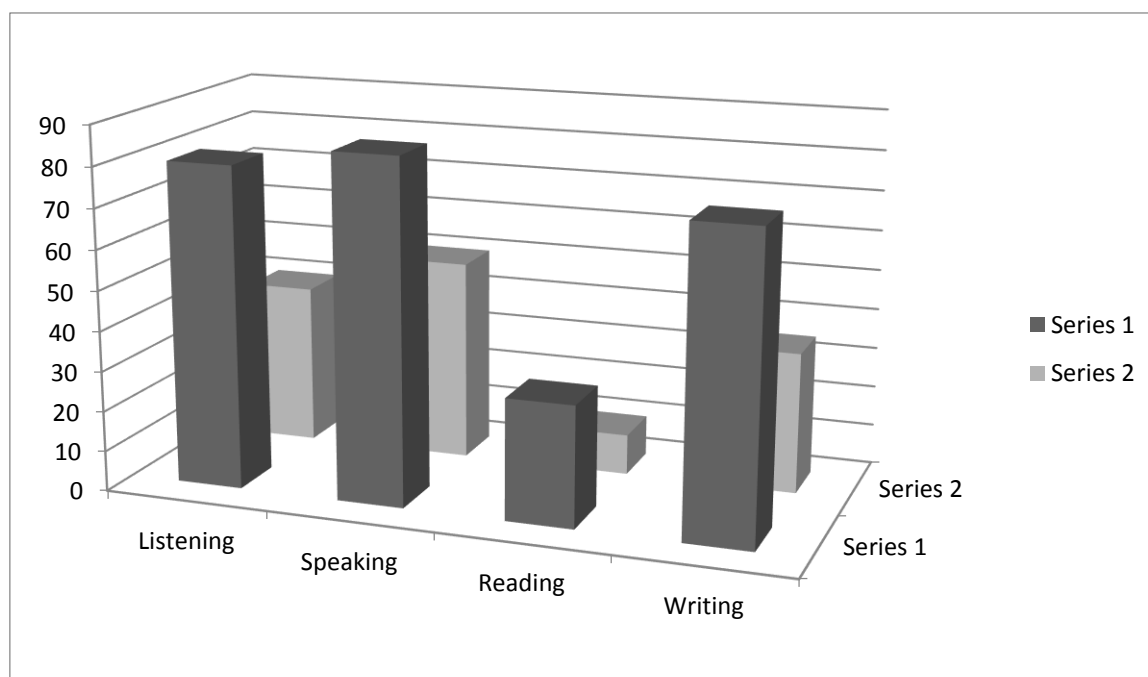


Figure 3: The differences between difficulties that students find during pre-tests and post-tests in communication skills

As demonstrated in figure 3, the young learner's scores in the post-tests are higher than those in the pre-tests. This shows significant differences in the scores obtained by the researcher.

Responding to the above figures, students used to find difficulties in the communication skills, since they were aware that to them English is a foreign language. This appeared clearly during the pre-tests related to listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students answered 2 questions out of 5 correctly in the listening quiz, and only few of them were able to answer oral questions related to the texts, in addition to their making some

pronunciation mistakes in the students' reading activity. Besides, students were not able to create a new ending for the text. They lacked creativity, and they were unable to write complete sentences.

The improvement in reading difficulties dropped to 10%, highlighting the effectiveness of storytelling in enhancing various language skills. Additionally, students demonstrated increased creativity and better grammar in their writing, showcasing an enhanced ability to form complete sentences and recognize mistakes. The qualitative analysis of interviews indicated that students viewed storytelling as an enjoyable and effective method for improving their communication skills, especially when compared to traditional textbook-based methods. After their early doubts, educators found that storytelling helped students build self-confidence, ignite their creativity, and improve their English.

The inquiry revealed more student and instructor challenges. Students were initially reluctant to interact with the tales due to pronunciation concerns and shyness, especially when speaking English in public. Teachers noted issues including too many children in a classroom and trouble meeting their requirements. Without these hurdles, storytelling solves multiple problems by establishing an engaging and helpful language learning environment. The study shows that storytelling improves vocabulary, pronunciation, auditory comprehension, and creativity. Storytelling activities also improved students' attitudes about learning English and increased their excitement for writing and speaking. While time limits, group dynamics, and students' declining reading culture are drawbacks, the research nonetheless sheds evidence on storytelling's advantages. However, storytelling may improve communication, creativity, and language development.

IV. FINDINGS

Narratives benefited pupils' reading, writing, speaking, and listening, the research found. Teachers knew kids required strong role models and that storytelling might help them learn a new language. The pre-test showed that some students had problems speaking and comprehending English before the narrative session. Students' communication abilities improved after adopting narrative strategies. They were more confident when speaking and more creative when writing since they knew more grammar and vocabulary.

Storytelling may help youngsters overcome fear and increase self-esteem. Due to English anxiety, many students struggled with pronunciation and understanding, particularly in class. The enjoyable and engaging portions of storytelling eased these worries. Writing and speaking activities based on stories helped students improve their language skills in a more comfortable context. Stories helped students' English understanding, inventiveness, and self-expression.

Some instructors were first skeptical about storytelling's benefits. These professors believed students' narratives may deviate from the curriculum and hinder language learning. Narrative classes increased pupils' communication abilities. This mindset made educators more likely to notice storytelling's benefits in boosting creativity, drive, and English proficiency. Teaching via narrative decreased students' pronunciation issues and disengagement from regular classroom activities, according to studies.

The investigation's limits and obstacles are also discussed. Time restrictions, collaborative group dynamics, and a declining student reading culture were these causes. Some students used translation applications because they didn't have enough time, which may have harmed their work. Working in groups helped students get more comfortable working together and sharing ideas, but some took on too much responsibility. The research indicated that a lack of a reading culture impeded kids' autonomous reading, despite their innate gift for auditory storytelling. Multimedia storytelling using moving graphics and sounds helped pupils comprehend and engage in class.

V. CONCLUSION

To sum up, storytelling is a powerful tool that seventh graders may use to improve and supplement their English skills. In addition, it acts as a tool to motivate pupils to work on their oral and written communication skills. This study looks at how well seventh graders' communication skills are improved by the use of English storytelling. This study's findings could shed light on why narrative is so important when teaching people how to communicate. The primary goal of this study is to draw conclusions on the power of narrative to inspire and encourage young language learners.

According to this research, getting students excited about learning may be as simple as getting them to participate in storytelling activities, where they are included into more interesting stories and are given the impression that they can improve their skills in writing, public speaking, and interpersonal relationships. Having strong communication and storytelling skills is crucial for succeeding in life skills as a whole.

According to the results of this research, young students may benefit from storytelling in order to improve their English language skills. After listening to English narratives, individuals performed better on the post-test than they did before.

Consequently, it's evident that teachers often disregard the significance of a supportive setting for language acquisition. When used in this context, storytelling greatly aids in creating an atmosphere that is favorable to learning.

The scope and quantity of subjects covered by this research are limited to only one foreign language. As an example, the researcher may take a narrow perspective of the topic by focusing on how storytelling might improve communication skills.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors gratefully acknowledge support from Al-Muthanna Education, Iraq.

Author Contributions: Mohammed Rafid Makki wrote the main manuscript text and prepared all figures. Laurence Ajaka supervised the manuscript and edited the manuscript.

Ethical Approval: The study protocol was approved by local ethics committee.

Disclaimer: None

Conflict of interest: There are no conflicts of interest to declare.

Funding disclosure: Support by ourselves.

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